

THE
Great Wickedness,
And Mischievous Effects of
Slandering,
Represented in a
SERMON

PREACHED AT
St. GILES without Cripplegate,
On Sunday Nov. 15. 1685.

By EDWARD FOWLER, D.D.

Together with a *Preface* and *Conclusion*
In his Own VINDICATION.

The Second Impression.

Thou shalt not bear False Witness against thy Neighbour

They are Grievous Revolters Walking with Slanders,
Jer. 6. 28.

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Great Western

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THE PREFACE.

IF the Readers of the Following *Sermon* knew how very little Time I had for the Composing of it, They would not be Offended with its Plainness: Nor Those that are *Ingenuous*, Critical in observing Faults or Over-sights. The *Conclusion* of the *Sermon*, which contains the *Occasion* of my Penning and Preaching it, I have here Publisht with some small Additions, which I think fit to mention, because those of whose Humanity I have had such plentiful Experience, will be forward enough, I presume, to give out, upon their finding any Passages they did not hear from the *Pulpit*, that I have *Lied* in the *Title Page*.

The Design of this Preface is to Vindicate my self from a great *Slander* of *theirs* (and I am prepared to do the like, as to all the *Other* I have heard of) which notwithstanding my Endeavours, both by *Word of Mouth* and *Letters*, to Clear my Self of, doth (as I understood the *Last Week*) still stick upon me: And 'tis *this*, That I should give, about a Year and three Quarters since, to a certain *Fanatick*, a *Knavish* *Certificate*, to bring him off, in a *Court of Justice*, from

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an *Indictment* of so Scandalous a Crime, as the *Depraving of the Common-Prayers*. And in short, That I *Certified* him to be a good *Church-Man*, whereas he never came to the *Communion* but once, in order to his being *Qualified* for the Office of *Common-Council-Man*. And if I ever gave to any such Person such a *Certificate*, I will freely acknowledge, I was a *Knave* indeed.

But before I proceed farther, I will say *this*, That I know not that I ever Repented of any *Certificate* I gave in my Life, except of One that two of my greatest Enemies, before they discovered their Malice towards me, did unawares draw me into; which was to this *Effect*, and, to the best of my remembrance, in these very Words, *That for ought I know, they were Men of Peaceable and Christian Spirits*; which *Certificate* was of their own Penning. I must Confess, I then shrewdly suspected that they were not Men of such Spirits, but because I had no certain *Knowledge* of the *Contrary*, upon a little deliberation I Subscribed it. But within a few dayes I was made sensible what a *Trapan* this was, being informed, That these very Men had Represented me, at *White-Hall*, as an Encourager of *Fanaticks* in our *Freedom-Vestry*. This was told me by a *Person of Honour*, who had it from Mr. *Secretary Jenkins*. But I Appeal to the present *Recorder of London*, and to the *Alderman* of our *Ward*, whether, in their *Presence*, I did not abundantly Clear my Innocence, as to this *Charge*. The *Latter* of these Gentlemen, meeting me in, or near, *Cornhill*, some dayes after the Hearing which we had in the *Recorders Chamber*, desired me to *Pardon* the *Chief Man* of them; and the *Recorder*, at the Conclusion of the Hearing, I think before most of the *Vestry-Men* were gone out (for there was

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was a full Appearance of *them* too) was pleased to Declare (*my Self* standing by him, and *divers Others*) That *he would justify my Honesty* (that was, with respect to my Proceedings in the *Vestry*) on any Ground in *England*.

My Adversaries thus failing of their Design, they, with *one* or *two* more, have, almost ever since *that* time to *this*, turned every Stone to Ruine me: And *London* Rings of their Carriage towards me. Nor hath it Satisfied them to abuse *Me* in the grossest manner, but they have put an intolerable Abuse upon a *Great-Man* or *Two*; for when they have been Expostulated with, for making my Life so *Uneasy*, they have Endeavoured to remove all Blame from *themselves*, by pretending that what they had done, was in meer Obedience to *their* Commands. And when it was replied (as once it was by my Self, to this Effect) *You first instigate Great Persons by your wretched Stories, and then Hypocritically pretend that my Troubles Originally proceed from them*; there was no Answer, but perfect Silence.

It might make a Competent *Volume*, to give an Account what *Slanders* they have devised, and *Methods* they have taken, from time to time, to do *Me* Mischief. I have a *Narrative* by me of the *Molestations* they have given me, to about *Half a Year* since, which I intended *then* to Publish, but upon *Second* Thoughts I judged it more prudent to hold my hand for some time longer.

But to return to this *Knavish Certificate*; The Person I certified for, was one Mr. *R. W.* who is one of my nearest Neighbours. The *Occasion* of the Certificate was *This*, Two of these *Three* or *Four* Men, who have
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so long been my Adversaries, accused this Man to me before his face (which fair play they rarely use) of having called the *Common-Prayers* an *Innovation*, upon a Motion to have them Read, at the meeting of their *Quest*, in the *Quest-House*. Mr. W. Professed that he only called the Reading of them upon *That Occasion* so, for that never any such thing had been done before, that ever he heard of in this Parish: And that he opposed the bringing up of such a Custom, for the *Poors* sake, because he presumed they would pay the Reader out of the *Purse*, that at *That Meeting* annually was made for *Them*. But he told me he declared to them, that if they would pay the Reader out of their *Own Purses*, they might have the *Prayers* in the *Church* with all his heart; and acknowledged then that he gave them a Proverbial Saying, which they made a mighty business of, that signified no more than that every Body might have his Liberty, either to go, or to *stay away*; which, though it might be decently enough used in most Cases not relating to Religious Affaires, yet I told him it was *Irreverently* done of him to use it in *this Case*; And though I could not impute it to his *Disaffection* to the *Prayers* (he having ever since I came to this *Parish*, and I understand, for some Years before was a constant attender on them upon *Sundays*) but to meer Rashness and Inconsideration, they being then in the heat of Passion; yet at that time, and more then once since, I rebuked him for it with severity enough. And I further Reproved him before these Men, for not being as forward as *any* to so good a Motion; though it was evident enough, that the Motion was not made from so good a Principle, as that of true Love to the Worship

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ship of God, but upon a design that was very Obvious. I farther added, that to encourage the Reading of the Prayers, at this Yearly Meeting, I would *My self* first read them at their Meeting again the next Year, and so for the future, which accordingly I did the last *Christmas*. They had another Story of a most indecent *Scoff* at our *Church Musick*, but *this* he utterly *denied*, and *persists* in doing so; and the Truth is I never *Believed* it, but now, for a reason I won't mention, I *disbelieve* it.

After all the Passionate Fending and Proving was over, and I had, as I said, smartly enough reproved Mr. *W*. I told them 'twas evident, he did not call the Prayers an *Innovation*, but only the *Reading them in the Quest-House*, or upon that Occasion, and then Exhorted them to more Christian behaviour towards one another, and to be Friends again; Having heard that there was an elder Grudg between *one* or *both* of these Men, and this Mr. *W*. And that the Difference did not begin now: Although *one* of them had been sometime before his great Intimate, and he Constantly gave Mr. *W*. the Title of his *Master*. Hereupon they Drank to each other, more than once, and shook hands. But the Next News I heard of them, which surprized me much, was, that they had made a Complaint of him to Mr. *Recorder*, and that the *Constable* had carried him away to *Guild-Hall*, and that there he was bound over to answer for his *Depraving the Common-Prayer*, upon these Mens Oaths, at the *Kings Bench Barr*. Whereupon this Mr. *W*. signified to me, That the *Lord Mayor* had advised him, to get a good *Petition* drawn up to my *Lord Chief Justice*, and as good a Certificate as his Minister and other Creditable People of the Parish, could give him;

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and that His Lordship promised him to present *both* with his *own* hand, and accordingly *He* performed that Promise. Hereupon I again Reproved him, and told him I hoped this would be for the future a *warning* to him; and finding him much dejected, I said I would willingly certifie for him *whatsoever* I knew to be true of him. And the Certificate I gave him was *this*, *That he was a Constant Attender on the Prayers of the Church, a Frequenter of the Holy Communion, in the way of the Church of England, and a forward man to Publick good Works in the Parish, and particularly at that time, to the Repairing of our Church and Steeple.* And in the *close*, I expressed how far I was from going about to excuse his fault; but in *what Words* I did this, I don't now remember.

This is the plain and Naked Truth of this matter, and I am yet to learn where lay my fault. Nay I am still fully satisfied in my Conscience, that I did nothing but what I might *Lawfully* do, *nay* nor any thing but what I was bound in *Common Justice* to do. For I never knew him other, than a Constant attender on the Prayers of *the Church*, nor than a Frequenter of the Holy Communion, I mean upon his *Knees* and at the *Rayles*. And, whatsoever Faults he may have been guilty of, I have found no one Parishioner more Publick Spirited, both in reference to the *Church* and *Parish*. And he was one of the best *Church-Wardens* (I finding him in that Office when I first came hither) that I believe the Parish ever knew. It hath been Objected to me, that he behaved himself *Disloyally* at the Election of *Sheriffs*, and therefore this Certificate was taken the *Worse* at my hands. But I need make no *other* Reply, than that this was more than I *knew*.
I have

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I have but *little* Acquaintance in this Parish to *this* Day, and had *less then*, so that I might very well be a stranger to his Behaviour at that Election. For my part, I never perceived any *Disloyalty* in him, but the Contrary, when he hath come to me, which he does very *rarely*, but when Business brings him, though he lives *close* by me. And had he discovered *Disaffection* to the Government, either in Church or State to *Me*, what is commendable in him should not have made with *Me* an Atonement for it. But there is no end of these my Obliging *Friends* Stories; I hope though, for the future they'll be more *Innocent* ones; I mean, that their *Tongues will be no Slander*. The worst thing I knew of this man was, that he would be too easily *Provoked*, but as *soon* (that I'll say for him too) *Pacified*. But why should I better know what this *W.* was, than what *These* Men were? I was I confess often *told* what *Two* of them were, but I would not *believe* it, till they did me the kindness to make me understand them whether I *would or no*; and since I have been sufficiently upbraided with my Charitable *Incredulity*. But in order to the more *Blackening* of *Me*, *One* or *More* of my good Friends have reported, That he was upon the *Scaffold* when the *King was Murdered*. I never heard of *This* till this very day, but I concluded 'twas a Wicked Lye, before I sent for him to ask him the Question. His Reply was, that he was then but a Boy about sixteen Years Old, (as any one may believe that knows him) and that he was at that time *Fourscore* Miles from *London*.

In short, Mr. *Attorney General* had a full Hearing of the forementioned Cause, was fully satisfied of the *Baseness* of it, and gave Mr. *W.* a *Noli Prosequi*.

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My Enemies after this, made an Article against me of this *Certificate*, at *Doctors Commons*, and it was thrown out again with Contempt enough. And yet, it is still made a hainous Crime in me, and if it must be so for the future, after this pains I have taken to clear my self of being faulty therein, *so let it. Per-*
Tertul. *vicacie nullum opposuit remedium Deus.* But I declare farther, that if I had refused to certifie what I knew to be true of this Man, I had not only been *Unjust*, but highly *Dis-ingenuous*. For at my first coming to this Parish, though he was a meer *Stranger* to me; and I never once *heard* of him before; he highly obliged me by standing up for my Right to Houses that were Built on the Church-Yard Ground, and which I recovered without going to Law, and by no *Mans* Assistance more than by his. And so much for *That*.

I am accused too of this very *Whiggish* Trick, and in My mind a *More* Knavish one, than the pretended *Certificate*, viz. That the *Lord Mayor*, or *some Great Man* (no body knows who) *sending to me to give my Judgment of Persons fit to be chosen Common-Council-Men, and to do my best towards procuring the Choyce of Loyal Persons, I recommended Fanaticks, or at least Whigs, and stickled for them.* But the Reader shan't need to be scared with the fears of another tedious Tale, for a *Word* or *Two* will do this business, viz. I solemnly profess both upon the Word of a *Christian* and a *Divine*, That I never concerned my self, either directly or indirectly, in that Affair, nor ever was desired by any Mortal to *Meddle* in it. But yet this Goodly complaint of me, was told me by no less a Man than a *Lord*, this last week. And I am not to seek to understand,

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stand, why just at *This Nick* of time, (I mean within this Week or Fortnight) there are such Strenuous but Secret Endeavours used by these Men, to make me all that's naught to our *GOVERNORS*.

It may be expected I should here Clear my self of Discouraging my *Church-Wardens* from Presenting *Dissenters*, which they made an *Article* of, but I need to say no more than *this* to it, That as they could make nothing *like a Proof* of it in the *Court*, so the *contrary* appeared *there*, by the Deposition of the Principal of their *own* Witnesses. And I had full Evidence ready to prove, That I only Charged them to Present *Impartially*, and not to Gratify any ones Revengeful Piques, but it was not *produced* because 'twas *needless*. And I had, after a full Hearing, *Ten Pounds Costs* given me against them. And now my Hand is in, a *Word* or *Two* to their *Grand Article*, That I gave the *Communion* to two of my *Church-Wardens* together, *Who were Excommunicated in the Court*, near a *Tear* and *half* since. But as I had *Leave* to *Defer* the *Publishing* of that *Excommunication*, so the *Sacrament* was given them *before*, 'twas *Publisht*; and I had then great Assurance, That *Excommunications* can take no *Effect* till they are *Publisht*; and what I did, was done upon the *best Advice* I was capable of having, and I Relyed upon the Authority of more than *One Ecclesiastical Judge*; and the same *Article* had been Exhibited against many other Divines besides *my self*, had they been so unhappy as to have had in their Parishes any People of such *Venomous* Spirits, as those Few I am infested with. So that, if this were a Fault in me, it was a Fault of most *Excuseable*, if I may not say *Invincible*, Ignorance. I no way Consulted mine *own Interest* in doing this thing,

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thing, and I Abominate the breaking of any Order of the Church to Gratify any Person whatsoever.

There is one thing more which I ought not to omit, viz. That whereas I might say (but that it may be replied, *I live far from Neighbours*) that no Man could live more Peaceably than I have done in this place, nor have been more forward to Oblige all Men, I have wondred sometimes, and so have others too who know my Conversation, how I should happen to have in my Parish such Bitter Enemies, though, I thank God, I have but a very few that I know of. But I have been for some time satisfied, that my Impartiality in Preaching hath netled some, and particularly my frequent exposing certain Vices of some among us, who value themselves mightily upon their Loyalty and Conformity, whom I have plainly told, That they are a Disgrace both to the King and the Church; and it may be I have but seldom dealt Severely with the Fanaticks, and Men of Factious, Seditious, and Rebellious Principles, but I have had a Bout with them too. Now this is a Fault I will not make the least Excuse for, and if it be a Fault, I believe most of the good Service I have done here to the King and Church, hath been principally Owing to it.

A Second Cause of my Troubles I am too sure (and I question whether I can name a Third) is, My Refusing to part with Mr. S. after all Endeavours that have been used to Set me against him. And for my great Averseness to Gratify his Enemies herein, I will Exercise my Readers Patience with this short Apology. viz. That, besides one Personal Pique, I soon perceiv'd, the Bottom of the Emnity against him, to be some Sermons he Preached of the Absolute Necessity of Restitu-
tion,

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tion, that grievously Galled some, who were too well known, to have Wronged the Poor, together with his declaring his Mind *Else-where* with some Severity, against several unjust Practices, before I had any Relation to this Parish. And it would have lain heavy upon my Conscience, while I had a Day to Live, should I have Joyned with *Those* against him, who, I was Satisfied, did Set themselves in Opposition to him, for the Zeal he had expressed upon so highly Commendable an account, as that of endeavouring to do Right to *Those* who are not in a Capacity of Righting *Themselves*. Besides, should I have dismissed Mr. S. I could not but expect the Curses of Hundreds of Needy Families, for, excepting two Noted Citizens, I know not his Fellow for bestirring himself, to get Relief for Poor People. I am Confident, That never was a Parish so obliged to a *Curate*, as this Parish hath been, for many Years, to *Him*, as *Ill* as he hath now, for a long time by *some few*, been Requited for it. And, to speak my Conscience, I am certain this Parish could very much better spare *my Self*, than it can *Him*.

I Confess, at my first coming, there was *some Misunderstanding* between *Him* and *Me*, which some hoped would have ended in a *settled Enmity* like to *Theirs*: But in a very short time, We came to know each Other *Better*, and then immediately all *That* Vanished, and hath never been in the *least* Revived to *this Day*.

And, as to his Preaching up *Loyalty*, and Conformity to the *Church*, I know not a Divine in *London* that is, or, ever since I came hither, hath been more Zealous; as *many Hundreds*, I may say some *Thousands*, can bear me Witness. I will make no other Apology for troubling the Reader with this long Scribble,

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ble, than this very short one, viz. *Meer Necessity* hath,
sorely against my Inclination, Compell'd me to it. But,
for all that, I expect to have the old lame *Distick* flung
in my Dish, viz.

*Hoc mihi pro certo est, quòd si cum stercore Certo,
Vinco, seu vincor, Certè Ego Maculor.*

And if I have *this Wipe*, I'll take it Patiently, though
of all *Gibes*, I confess, I *Most* hate *True* Ones.

St. Giles Cripplegate,

Nov. 16. (85.)

THE

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T H E

Great Wickedness, And Mischievous Effects of SLANDERING Represented.

Pfalm. 101. 5.

Whoſo privily Slandereth his Neighbour, him will I Cut off.

I Shall not detain you with any thing of *Preface*, but fall immediately upon the Business I deſigned in the choice of theſe Words, for my Preſent Subject.

The Juſt and Pious K I N G, who was the *Pen-Man*, ſpends this ſhort *Pſalm* in declaring to his People, how he was reſolved to manage himſelf, in reference to the encouragement of Piety and Virtue among them; and the

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discouragement of Vice and Wickedness. And among other particular Vices which he tells them should by no means escape Punishment, that of *Slandering their Neighbours* comes in, in the Words of my Text. Nor is here any one Vice which he expresseth so great an abhorrence of, or so severely Threatens, as this of *Slandering*. For, whereas he saith, *A forward Heart shall DEPART FROM ME: I will not KNOW a Wicked Person: And him that hath a High Look, and a Proud Heart will not I SUFFER: And he that worketh Deceit shall not DWELL WITHIN MY HOUSE: And he that telleth Lies shall not TARRY IN MY SIGHT;* He makes *Slandering their Neighbours*, a Capital Crime, and declareth That *Whoso Slandereth his Neighbour, him would He CUT OFF.*

First, I will endeavour to shew, what is here Meant by *Slandering ones Neighbour.*

Secondly, Upon What accounts we may presume this Good King did thus Threaten those that should be Guilty of this Practice.

I. What

I. What is here Meant by *Slandering ones Neighbour*. Thus to do, is either to *Devise* a Tale of another and then *Tell* it; That is, *Such* a Tale, as tends to the bringing of a *Blot* upon the Person of whom 'tis invented and told: Or to tell a false Story from *other* hands as true, and with a design to have it *Believed* without sufficient Evidence of the truth of it. Now although this *Latter* way of *Slandering* be a very Great Sin, as proceeding from great want of Charity, and being perfectly opposite to that Golden Rule of our Saviour, *What you would that Men should do to you, do you even the same to them*, (than which no Maxim in Morals is more plainly taught by the Law of Nature, *i. e.* Right Reason unassisted by Divine Revelation, and which a Pagan Prince gives us in Negative Terms, *viz. Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris. Whatsoever thou wouldst not have done to thy self, do not offer to do to another*: I say, as this *Latter* way of *Slandering* is for these reasons a very Great Sin, and consequently will meet with, where it is not timely repented of, very Sore Punishment from Gods hands) yet the *Former* way, *viz. Slandering* by *Inventing* of Stories to

the Blemishing of any ones *Good Name*, is a *Greater Sin*, (as is evident at first hearing) and therefore deserves *Greater Punishment*. And the more the Tale *Blackens* his Reputation of whom it is told, and the greater, or more useful the Person is in the World who is defamed, as also the greater the Injury is that is designed him in telling it of him, the greater still is this exceedingly great Sin. Now the *Slanders* that King *David* must needs mean here in the *Text*, and whom he threatneth with being *Cut off*, are such as shall *Devise* and *Invent* Lies to the Injuring of their Neighbours, *i. e.* of any Persons, be their Rank and Quality what it will; which the word *Neighbour* doth import. And they are onely *such Slanders* as *these* which must be here thus threatned, because the *other* Sort (*viz.* Such as do not *Invent*, but only *Rashly give Credit* to and *Report* Lies of their Neighbours) though *They* are great Sinners too, yet we cannot think that the King would doom them to so great a Punishment. For in all Places, there are too many of *these* Offenders to be made Obnoxious to so severe a Sentence. And besides, it is not so easy a matter for the Magistrate to find Evidence sufficient

ficient in such a case as *this* , to found such a Sentence as that of *Death* upon it.

II. I come to shew upon *what Accounts* this Good King did *thus* threaten such as *Privily Slandered their Neighbours*. There is very great reason for his being thus Incens'd against them.

First, Because Inventers of Slanders are in the number of the most *Injurious* and *Mischievous* People in the World.

i. They are most Mischievous to those Persons who are the *Objects* of their *Slanders*; None are *more* so, except those Instruments of *Satan*, who by drawing others to *Sin* destroy their *Souls*. After the Divine Graces and Virtues, which are necessary to Qualify for the Heavenly Happiness, a Man's *Good-Name* is the most highly Valuable. It is not only *Better than precious Oyntment*, and rather to be chosen than *Silver and Gold* (as the Wise Man saith) but 'tis to be preferr'd before all *Temporal* Enjoyments whatsoever, not excepting *Life* it self. For who can take any *Comfort* in his Life, (unless he be de-vested of all Humanity, and strangely sunk into the Brutish Nature) that is sensible of having *Out-liv'd* his *Good-Name*? And as for those that are
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So sunk, it would be much better for *themselves* as well as for the *World*, if they were out of Being. And as it is *Natural* to those Men who have any thing of Generousness and Ingenuity in their Tempers, above all things to Covet a *Good-Name*; So there is *this great reason* why they *should*, namely, Because it is the chief Thing that makes Men *useful* in the *World*; and there are no such *unprofitable* or *insignificant* Creatures upon God's Earth, as those are who have *lost* their Reputation, or had *never any* to lose. I mean by a *Good-Name* and *Reputation*, that of a *Good-Man*: Of a Man that hath imbibed good *Principles*, and is *true* to them: Of a Man Revering the Great God, and Fearing to break wilfully any of His Laws. That which either in the *Sacred Writings*, or in the Books of the *Philosophers* is called a *Good-Name*, is wholly Founded upon Good *Morals*. A *Large Understanding*, *Shrewdness of Wit and Parts*, *High Titles of Honour*, &c. have, 'tis Confessed, acquired to their Owners *Great Names*, but these alone never made any Man the Possessor of a *GOOD-Name*.

Now so far as any Man's Reputation, in reference to his *Morals*, is Eclipsed, so much the less Capable doth he immediately become
of

of being Serviceable in his Generation. The less of a *Good-Name* any one hath, the fewer Opportunities and Advantages will he have, of being beneficial to his Fellow-Creatures, either in their Temporal or Spiritual Concerns, but especially in their Spiritual. And as it is chiefly upon *this* account that a *Good-Name* ought to be so Highly esteemed; So to Esteem it upon any *other* account *separate* from *this*, is nothing better than a Gratification of *Animality* or *Fond Fancy*. But *this* Consideration makes it highly reasonable to prize a *Good-Name* above Rubies, and above the Wealth of both the *Indies*, and to reckon our Sufferings *herein* in the number of the greatest Worldly Sufferings. So, it is manifest, King *David* did, by divers Passages in his *Psalms*: As particularly in *Psal.* 35. 11, 12. saith he, *False Witnesses did rise up against me, they laid to my charge things which I knew not* (or which I was altogether Guiltless of) *they rewarded me evil for good* (or this Evil of Slander for all the good Services I have done them) *to the spoiling, or* (as 'tis in our *Old Translation*) *to the great discomfort of my Soul*, And *Psal.* 69. 19, 20. he *thus* Complains; *Thou hast known my Reproach and my shame and my Dishonour, mine Adversaries*

versaries are all before thee, Reproach hath broken my heart and I am full of Heaviness. So that a *Slanderer* being a Robber of *that* which is deservedly so Precious, or at least he always being so in his *Endeavour*, there was great reason why this Holy King should so Abominate him, as we find by our Text he did : But,

2. As the *Slanderer* is thus highly Injurious to Those who are the *Objects* of his *Slanders*, so is he the most Pestilent Creature to the *Community* of which he is a Member. Those who invent *Slanders*, are the greatest Pests and Plagues to a Body Politique. They are continually stirring up Strife and Contention, Animosities and Emulation : And where *these* are, St. James tells us, *There is Confusion, and every evil Work.* One of these is sufficient to set a whole *Neighbourhood* together by the Ears, and a Few of them are enough to enflame a whole *City*, nay a whole *Kingdom*. King Solomon saith, *Prov. 16. 27. An ungodly Man diggeth up evil, & in his Lips there is a burning Fire.* And St. Paul, 2 Cor. 12. 20. brings in Swellings and Tumults immediately after Backbitings and Whisperings. Which he had good reason to do, since *those* are the *Natural* Consequents and Effects of *these*. For they

they not only sow Seeds of Division among the People, but beget a mutual Mis-understanding between *them* and their *Governours*. These Backbitings and Whisperings render *Governours* jealous of their *People*, and the *People* as jealous of their *Governours*. Princes see with other Mens Eyes, as they Act by other Mens Hands; and therefore 'tis the most difficult Thing, and even next to impossible for them, ordinarily to discern between *Calumnies* and *True Stories*. They have greater Matters alwayes to mind, than to have Leisure to Dive to the bottom of those *Reports* that are brought to them. And therefore, no wonder if they are frequently Abused and Imposed upon; and so, perswaded to take *some* for their *Worst*, who are in the number of their *Best* Subjects; and *others* for their *Best*, who are really their *Worst*. And while the Slanderers are as Cunning and Dextrous as they are Wicked and Malicious, What can alwayes prevent this, and the horrible Mischiefs occasioned thereby, but such a degree of Wisdom and Knowledg, as no where resides but in GOD himself?

Now King David had great reason to resolve upon doing his Utmost towards the Root-

ing out of his Kingdom such People as *These*, when he knew them to be the great Instruments of their Father the Devil, in making his Subjects uneasy to himself, and to one another, and himself too as uneasy unto them: When he knew that all good Order and Government, was inconsistent with the Encouragement, or Toleration of such a Crew of vile Miscreants. When he was so well aware, that let such pretend to what *Loyalty* they pleased, 'twas impossible for him to have Naughtier Subjects than *These* are.

Let us Consider what St. James saith of a Slandering Tongue, Ch. 3. v. 5. *The Tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things; behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the Tongue is a Fire, a World of Iniquity. So is the Tongue (or a Calumniating Backbiting Tongue) among our Members, that it defileth the whole Body, and it is set on Fire of Hell.*

Secondly, As Inventers of Slanders are the most Mischievous and Destructive sort of People; so, whilst they are neglected and let alone, they are the most Successful in their wicked Designs. They are so Successful, that what our

Proverb

(II)

Proverb saith of a *Flayl*, is much truer of a *Slandering Tongue*, that, *There is no Fence against it*. If any thing be a sure Protection from it, one would think the most Spotless Innocence, and the most Exemplary Virtue needs must, but the Example of our Blessed *Saviour* assures us of the Contrary. No Man ever arrived to *His* Innocence or Vertue; but for all that, never was any one so strangely Wronged in his *Good-Name* as *He*. Though no Man more Practised or Taught *Loyalty*, yet was He Represented as an Enemy to *Cæsar*. Though never had the *Devil* such an Enemy, yet was he Calumniated as a Great *Wizzard*, in league with *Beelzebub* the Prince of the Devils. Though never was the Breast of any one so possessed with Divine Love, nor any man's Mind with so great a Reverence and Veneration of the Divine Majesty, yet was He Stigmatized with the Blackest of all Marks and Characters, viz. That of a *Blasphemer*. And as the most horrid *Slanders* were invented and published to the World of Him, so were they generally believed too. There is Nothing we are Owners of that's so Exposed to the Mercy of others, as are our *Good-Names*. Whosoever hath a Tongue in his

C 2 Head,

Head, if he be but *Wicked* enough, and not Universally known to be a Wicked Man, can, when he pleaseth, do our Names a mischief. The *Wise man* saith, Prov. 25. 18. that *A Man that beareth false Witness against his Neighbour, is a Maul, and a Sword, and a Sharp Arrow.* That is, He is made up and Compounded of all fatal Mischiefs. A *Maul* cannot give greater Bruises, nor more effectually Fell to the ground, than this sort of Weapon: Nor a *Sword* pierce deeper, or Cut and Slash more Cruelly: Nor a *sharp Arrow* wound at a greater distance, no nor at nothing so great a distance; for there is no getting out of the Reach of a Slandering Tongue; nor is there any where to be found Security against it: I mean, besides the *Special and Extraordinary Providence* of God. St. James tells us in the fore-mentioned Chapter, ver. 7. &c. that *Every kind of Beasts, and of Birds, and of Serpents, and things in the Sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of Man-kind; But the Tongue (viz. The Tongue of a Slanderer, as is plain by ver. 9.) can no Man tame, it is an unruly Evil, (such an Evil as there is no dealing with it) full of deadly Poison: Such as is too strong for the most Sovereign Antidote.*

Many (saith the Son of Syrack) have fallen by the Edge of the Sword, but not so many as have fallen by the Tongue: Well is he that is defended from it, and hath not passed through the Venome thereof. Who hath not drawn the Yoke thereof, nor hath been bound in its bands? For the Yoke thereof is as a Yoke of Iron, and the bands thereof as bands of Brass. The death thereof is an evil death, the Grave were better than it. So that the Slanderer being an Enemy, against whose Assaults the greatest Human Power, Policy or Wisdom, cannot wholly defend us; well might King David conceive so high a displeasure against him, as he here expresseth. And the like displeasure doth he declare against him, Psalm. 120. 2, 3, 4. Deliver my Soul, O Lord, from lying Lips, and from a deceitful Tongue. What shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done unto thee thou false Tongue? Sharp Arrows of the Mighty, with Coals of Juniper. Or, with hot burning Coals, according to the other Translation.

I proceed now to make some Application of what hath been said; And it shall be This.

First, This little we have discoursed on this Argument, is abundantly enough to render the
Sin

Sin of Slandering our Neighbour most abominable in our Eyes. I mean,

1. The Sin of *Devising* and *Inventing* Defamations and Slanders. This indeed is *such* a wickedness as one would think it should be needless to caution those against it, I will not say, who profess *Christianity*, but who have not bid adieu to all *Humanity*. It is such a *Black*, such a *Hellish* Sin, as that the Devil hath both his chief *Names* and *Characters* from it. 'Ο Δι' βολῆς, i. e. This Name *Devil*, signifies the Slanderer. *Satan* signifies the *Spiteful Enemy*. The chief *Characters* we meet with in Scripture of the *Devil*, are these two, *The Father of Lies*, and *The Accuser of the Brethren*. And therefore nothing can denominate us more perfectly like the *Devil*, than this forging of *Lies* and *Calumnies* against our *Brethren*. And we see, *Psalms*. 50. 19, &c. with what severity the Great God expresseth himself against those that dare to commit *This Sin*. Saith He, *Thou givest thy Mouth to Evil, and thy Tongue frameth Deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy Brother, thou slanderest thine own Mothers Son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thy self: But*

I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine Eyes. And v. 16. He asks such as These, What they had to do to declare his Statutes, or that they should take his Covenant into their Mouths: Or to make profession of his Religion, or indeed of any Religion. And v. 22. He threatens them that He would tear them in Pieces, and there should be none to deliver, if they would not consider what he now had said, and lay it to heart.

King Solomon putteth this Practice of Slandering, in the number of those Sins, which God Abominates in a more Especial manner. Prov. 6. 16. &c. These six things doth the Lord hate, yea seven are an Abomination to him. A Proud Look, a Lying Tongue, and Hands that shed Innocent Blood: An Heart that deviseth Wicked Imaginations: Feet that be swift in Running to Mischief: A False Witness that speaketh Lies: And he that soweth Discord among Brethren. And indeed all these Seven things, except the first, are such as make the proper Character of This sort of Slanders I am now exposing. And Rev. 22. 15. Whosoever loveth and maketh a Lie, is reckoned with Dogs and Sorcerers, and Whoremongers, and Murtherers, and Idolaters; who are to have their Portion.

Portion in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone.

2. Let us no less hate the Practice of Taking up Evil Reports against any, than that of Inventing them. We learn from *Psal. 15. 3.* That This also will exclude us the Kingdom of Heaven; in that 'tis here said, that among those that shall abide in Gods Tabernacle, and dwell in his Holy Hill, He is one that Backbiteth not with his Tongue, nor doth Evil to his Neighbour, nor taketh up a Reproach against his Neighbour: Or doth not without Good Evidence give credit to it, and much less spread and propagate it. The Wise Man maketh him a Vicked doer, who giveth heed to false Lips; and a Lyar, who giveth ear to a naughty Tongue. *Prov. 17. 4.* This is as much a Transgression of the forementioned Golden Rule, Of doing as we would be done unto, as is Devising and Forging Slanders. I doubt there is not much less Malice in this Practice, but I am sure it favours of every whit as little Charity, as that other Practice doth. I can have no Charity for that man, against whom I am forward to believe and report whatsoever of evil I chance to hear of him. Nay, Whisperers and Backbiters, as well as Inventers of Evil things, are reckoned by Saint Paul,

Paul, among those obdurate Sinners, of whom he Pronounceth, That God had given them over *eis v&v adoximon* to a Reprobate mind, Rom. 1. 29, 30.

Hasty Believers and Spreaders of false Reports, are the Tools and Instruments of those that invent them, for the doing of the Mischief they design by them. And it is almost wholly Long of these, that Those wicked People are in a Capacity of doing any Mischief by their Forgeries.

We are Bound therefore by the strictest Bonds, by the Bonds of Charity, of Justice, and of Self-Preservation, to be extremely Cautious of lending our Ear to Tale-Bearers, lest we be Involved in their Guilt, and so brought to share with them in their dreadful Punishment. Since this is an exprels Law of God, Thou shalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among thy People, Lev. 19. 16. Surely 'tis as much a Law of His, That we should not give encouragement to those whom we know to be Tale-bearers, by Listening to their Tales.

Nay, We are obliged to be so far from Believing a Report against our Neighbour, meerly from the Information of any One or a

Few Persons, of whose Integrity, and of whose certain Knowledge of the Truth thereof, we have not great Assurance, that we may not neither conclude any Man *Guilty*, from his being Accused by the *Generality*. There is indeed a common saying, *Vox Populi est vox Dei*, The Voice of the People is the Voice of God. And in a certain Sence it may well pass for a true Proverb. But as it is vulgarly understood, The Voice of the People is not the Voice of God, as we of this City and Kingdom have often found by sad Experience. All Wise and Honest Men cannot be, at this time of day, to seek for Conviction, What great Sufferers, even our Governours themselves have been *Wrongfully* made to be, by the Voice of the People. And I dare Affirm, That he who now takes the common Vogue for unquestionable Evidence, had he lived in the Dayes of our Blessed Saviour, would have been made One among that wicked Crew, who applauded the Sentence pronounc'd against Him.

And there is this weighty Reason, why Common Fame it self is not to be Confided in, viz. For ought we can tell this Fame might first arise from but One Man, and that Man a Liar too;

too; and this we *Certainly* know, that the Generality are so void of Charity, as hastily to Catch at Scandalous Stories, and are much more easily perswaded to *think* and *report* Evil Things upon very *slight* Grounds, than good and commendable Things, upon the most *evident* and *apparent* Ones. And none have so sad Experience of the Truth of *this*, as *Those* of whose Reputation we are obliged to be the most tender. I mean our Governours in Church and State.

But suppose we have certain Assurance, that such an ill Report did take its first Rise from not a few, yet we may not be sure but that these might be *United* in one common Interest and Design; but in *this* Case, the Report of many carries no whit stronger Evidence with it, than if it came but from *One* Mouth. And this was the very Case of our *Blessed* Lord: They were many who first divulged vile Slanders of Him, but they were All acted by one and the same Principle, *viz.* That of *Malice*; and by the same Design, *viz.* That of *Disgracing* Him among the People, and Incensing of King Herod and Pontius Pilate against Him.

But Lastly, Suppose we could be certain, That the many first Reporters of Bad Stories

were *not* Linked together by one Common Tye; yet even in *this* Case too we are bound to use Caution and Deliberation, before we give them undoubted Credit. Especially if those Stories relate to Words or Actions that are capable of a *two-fold* Interpretation. The same *Actions* may be Faulty or Commendable, according to the *Circumstances* wherewith they are attended. And the same *Words* may be so too, according to the *Occasion* or *Connexion* of them. But People are generally, even those who have no *Malicious* Intention, Rash, and Heady in judging of *Actions* without weighing *Circumstances*; and in running away with *half* Sentences; or with *whole* ones, without Considering, What *went before*, or *followed after*.

So that, I say, as we would not fall under the Guilt of that *Sin*, the exceeding Heinousness of which I have been representing, Look we to it; that we be not Hasty in taking up Evill Reports of any Body, let them come to us from never so *many*. If this be warrantable, as I have already intimated, the joyning with those who ran down our *Saviour*, and at last Nailed *Him* to the *Cross*, had been very Excuseable, not to say *Defensible*.

And

And let us believe as *well* as, without offering Violence to our Reason, we can of *all* Men; and chuse much rather in our Judging, and in our Reports of Men, to offend on the *Right* than on the *Left* hand. I am certain, thus much is implied in those *two* Precepts of our Lord, viz. *Judge not that ye be not Judged; for with what Judgment ye Judge ye shall be Judged, and with what Measure ye mete, it shall be meted to you again.* Matth. 7. 1, 2. And *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge Righteous Judgment,* John 7. 24.

2. Ought the Slandering of our Neighbour to be so detested by us, then what an Abominable thing is it, to Slander, and injure the *Good-Name* and Reputation of the *Kings Majesty*; and of those that under *Him* have Authority over us! 'Tis an exprefs Law of God, *Exod. 22. 28.* & repeated by *St. Paul*, viz. *Thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor Curse (or speak evil of) the Ruler of thy People.* And as to the *King*, 'tis so great a wickedness to defame *Him*, or say any thing to the lessening of his Honour, that the *Wise Man* thus chargeth us, *Eccles. 10. 20.* *Curse not the King, no not in thy thought.*

And!

And 'tis as much the *Peoples* interest, as it is the *Kings*, that He be not *Slandered*, or *Spoken Evil* of. For *Seditious* and *Rebellious Practices* do usually arise from *Mens* first taking this *Wicked Liberty*; as we have all known by very *woeful Experience*. And we know by the like experience, that the *King* suffers not more by those leud *Practices*, than the *People* necessarily must.

It was a good saying, as I remember, of *Aristotle*, ὁ τον Ἀρχόντα κακηγορεῖ την πόλιν ὑβρίζει, *Whosoever* defames the *Prince*, is *Injurious* to the *Common-Wealth*; or *Mischiefs* his *Subjects*.

And as for those that take liberty to *Invent* or *Tell* *Stories* reflecting upon their *Ecclesiastical Governours*, *Pastors*, or *Teachers*, they are in a special manner *injurious* to the *Souls of Men*. For nothing so tends to the *prejudicing* of their *People* against their *Doctrine*, as their having an *Evil Opinion* of their *Persons*. And for this Reason, I think none are so much concerned to keep their *Good-Names* as unspotted as they can, and to clear themselves of whatsoever *Aspersions* are cast upon them, as *They* are.

The Conclusion.

AND now I will take this Occasion to inform you, That *Some* having greatly concerned themselves of late, to carry Tales of Scandalous Passages which they pretend to have heard from the *Pulpits* of divers of my Brethren in *this City*, there are *Others* who have very lately done the like good Office for *My self*. I am too well aware *Who* they are, I will tell you who they are *Not*; I am very confident, they are *not Papists*, at least not *Professed* ones. But you of *this Parish* may have a shrewd guess within a very few; for you must needs know some to have long expressed as bitter and implacable enmity against me, as if we had been of *two Churches* and *Contrary Religions*: And that without the least provocation on *My* part. And I doubt not there are many of the *Roman Religion*, from whom I should have had much more *Just, Fair, and Christian Treatment*. As *silent* as I have been hitherto, this is not the *first* nor *second* time neither, that I have been in the *self-same* manner most vilely abused by *These People*, as in due time, I trust in God will be made manifest.

manifest. My last Accusation was this, (or at least the last I have heard of) That I vented in *this* Pulpit, on *All-Saints-Day*, viz. This day Fortnight, a *Bitter Curse* against the *Papists*, together with all those (for which I trust to the *Memory* of an Extraordinary Person) who give them encouragement. And the Curse I understand was worded to this Effect; *I wish their Names and Memories may Rot Eternally*. Whatsoever the *Express Words* were, I hear they perfectly *Agreed* in the *self-same*, which is so far from Evidence of their telling *Truth* of me, that 'tis a much stronger Argument of their being *Conspirators* against me. But may this *Curse*, instead of falling upon the *Papists*, or those that *Encourage* them, light upon my *Own Name and Memory*, if I either Pronounced *It*, or any *Curse like it* against either the *One* or the other, or any *Curse at all* against either. And as I solemnly Appeal to *God Almighty*, so I Appeal to *You my Auditors*, Whether there were the least *Appearance* or *Shadow* of an *Occasion* given by me, for such an Information as *this* against me. I Appeal to *You* also, Whether you can think it *Possible*, that such an Accusation as *this* could arise from *meer Mistake*. I am Confident, That All who minded

*mind*ed my Sermon, will pronounce, that neither *this Charge*, nor *any Charge* that hath the least *likeness* to it, be it *Worded* how it will, must be nothing better than *pure Invention*; which we have shewn is the most *Horrible* way of *Slandering*.

I prevailed with a most Worthy Prelate to hear that Sermon read out of my Notes word for word, and I cannot call to mind my having said above three or four Words more than are in my Notes, and *those* I acquainted his Lordship with, meerly that I might *truly* say, That He had nothing of the Sermon Concealed from Him. And after it was read, not one *Bit* of a Sentence could be fixed upon, that might put my Enemies in *mind* to Invent such a Slander as *this* of me, unless it were *this*, viz. If we do not justify to all the World (meaning, as before was expressed, we Divines of the Church of England) the Representations we have made of that Religion (viz. the Roman) to our People, let our Names stink, and our Memories be covered with Eternal shame. And *these* words next follow, 'Tis a most wicked thing to Slander a particular Person, and much more to Slander and Be-lye a whole Church, and that so Excellent and Famous a Church, as that of Rome once

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was.

was. So that if I had been Accused of Cursing my Self, or my Brethren, instead of the Papists, and those that Encourage them, there had been a much more Colourable Pretence for such a Calumny.

I know I han't lived such a Life as that after so Solemn Appeals as I have now made, my perfect Innocence, as to *this Charge*, should be in the least Questioned by those, who have the least Knowledge of me. But as for those that are *Acquainted* with me, I am certain they need no such Appeals to Satisfy them, that I could not be Guilty of so *Un-Christian* a thing, as the Cursing of any Man, upon any account; and much less, as the Cursing of any Sort of Men, upon the account of their being of a *different* Religion from my Self. For as to all *such*, I have very rarely been blamed for any *Defect* of Charity towards them; but I have often been Censured as being in the *other* Extreme, *viz.* Of the *Excess* of Charity, which I have alwayes concluded to be *much* the *safest*.

Good Lord, That any, who profess themselves *Christians*, should be so *depraved*, as to attend our Preaching God's holy Word, with no better a Design, than to be Spyes upon Us,
and

and ~~to~~ catch at all advantages (and when they can find none, to make them) for the Ruining of us and our Families; Nay, and which is worse, if worse can be, that such should dare to receive the Holy Communion, and that at Their hands too, against whom they are alwayes Contriving of Mischief.

God Grant that such People may at length seriously lay to heart, the wretched State they are in, and consider what a severe Reckoning, they shall one day be called to for such Practices. And that, if timely Repentance prevent it not, there will most certainly be Bitterness in the Latter End.

I have sometimes e'ne Trembled to think, what horrid Crimes the Devil in time may draw such into, who are so forsaken of the Divine Grace, as to be Able to do such things as These.

I have long Remembred my Adversaries particularly in my Daily Prayers, that God would be pleased to give them true Repentance for the many great Injuries they have done me, and for their other Sins, that their Souls may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

I am under a greater necessity than you are aware of, thus to clear my Innocence; and what I have now done, hath not been without the best Advice.

Thanks

Thanks be to God, His Majesty is so Just and Gracious a Prince, as instead of readily crediting ill Stories of us, to give us *Opportunities* for clearing of our Innocence: And very willingly Condescends, *Audire alteram Partem*, to the hearing of our *Vindications*. Nor is His Majesty forward to the receiving of Satisfaction concerning our Innocence, than Patient in Hearing Complaints against us. Which Grace of lays a Farther Obligation upon us, to Pray for His Majesties Long and Happy Reign over us.

I will now Conclude, with that most Christian Petition of our Church in the Litany. We beseech thee Good Lord, That it may please Thee to forgive our Enemies, Persecutors and Slanderers, and to soften their Hearts. And with the Intercession of our Blessed Saviour upon the Cross, for his Bloody Enemies: Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

F I N I S.